In Herskovits & Herskovits I-5 (1928-1929) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

Seeing him, our host gave an exclamation of pleasure. 439
"But this is Ajako, the husband of Granman Yankuso's daughter!"

"*Kuma, Bakra. Kuma, Bakra wuyo*—Good morning, white man, good morning, white woman," he said, and 576
our answer was, "*Ajako, kuma*—Ajako, good morning."

Had we awakened, no? This, in the Saramacca idiom, was how one asked if we were well, if we were alive, since the euphemism for death is sleep. We answered him in their patterned phrase.

"*Hafu so*," we said, using their equivalent for fairly well, only half so.

Ajako laughed. The white man had learned. "Are you no better? I hear the gods like you well," he replied.

And so the conversation went on, each giving account of himself.

Finally Ajako said, "Granman Yankuso waits for you, 648
Bakra. He sends you his greetings, and says he will welcome you in Asindopo Lantiwe, his village. You have the freedom of the river. The village chiefs know of your coming. They will receive you. The river is not too high now, for top-side the rains are at an end. Here on the lower river, too, rocks that today are under water will appear tomorrow or the next day. The water is not too high now. The Granman sends word to you that you can start."

But what of him? Would he not come with us as our chief paddler, to show us the way through the many channels? But he smiled and said he was going to the 221
Marowyne. He could not turn back, he told us, for he had 854
the boats to sell, and money to earn there, while his wife was nursing her infant. When the child was seventeen, eighteen months old, then he would be back with his wife again, cutting new fields for her, and making children. While the infant was at the breast, he would be away working.

There was more talk, leading gently—*safri*, softly, as the 648
Bush Negro himself says—to the subject of certain unfriendly villages. There were two of them up the river that

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-S (1928-1929) 1934
383 Book Negroes 383
Saramacca

And Fenekonde said, "Mourning is hard. The widow must not go to the river alone to wash. Other women must take her there. Her husband's spirit might seize her. Her hair must be cut. If not, he will get her by the hair. Her clothes must be ugly. She must keep herself unclean, so that his ghost will not long for her when he sees her."

But mourning was difficult not only for a woman. A man's mourning period was no less burdensome, they added. He too wore old clothes. When he went to wash, his wife's brother took him to the river. If he had another wife, he did not go into the hammock with her, for the dead woman would be envious and would kill him.

There were times, however, when women did not go into mourning for their husbands. If a woman carried a child in her womb, then she did not put on mourning clothes at all. She did not weep, she was not allowed to show any grief. That same night the dead man's oldest living brother would come with her in the hammock. If there were no brother, another man would come, for some man had to come.

"He must come. It cannot be otherwise. She cannot go to her hammock alone. So it is every night when a woman carries a child in her womb. A man must be with her, for the sake of the child."

3

In the clearing the widow stood stamping rice. About her the rice hulls flew and made a half circle of gold at her dark feet. Her mortar, which was made of a hollowed-out log, like a drum, was large and reached almost to her hips. On the ground was a large tray which she used for winnowing the rice. With slow, regular beats she lifted and dropped the pestle, and as her body swung with its slow motion the head of the sleeping child on her back rolled this way and that.

Her two small boys had gone to live in her mother's village, but this girl child remained with her. She was born

Herskovits & Herskovits X-5 (1929-1930) 1934
Bush Negroes
Saramacca

7

The next day was our last among the Saramacca people. Bayo came to us early to help with the packing. He was apparently none the worse for his seizure and, as he worked, we could tell from his manner how release had come to him and how the tension we had noticed the past few days had left him.

On his body were no marks. His mouth showed no cuts where the glass was bitten off and chewed. When we told him about the glass, he knew nothing of it. Had he not known about this eating of glass, he might well have doubted our word, for when we examined his lips and palate and tongue, not even a scratch showed.

"What did you drum last night, Bayo?"

"When, before the obia came to me?"

He remembered nothing after he had leaped from the improvised apinti to run into the bush.

"Not when you drummed apinti, but when you came back here and took the tumao to the river."

"I don't remember. Did I do that?"

8

Despite the early hour we had to leave in order to catch the weekly train for the coast, the boats of our friends began to be seen off the landing place as they came to say their farewells. The good woman Tita, whom they called Mother Snake behind her back, was the first to arrive. She walked slowly up from the river bank, pipe in mouth, a pot on her head, and one in each hand. The pots held obias which, she said, were made especially for us, to give us great powers in our own land—one to keep us safe from the ghosts of those we had wronged; one to guard us against the acts of the unfriendly living; one to make all those from whom we sought advantage "love" us.

Sedefo's younger wife came with her child on her back to collect whatever tin cans were about, and some gift for the child when it wakened, knowing that something was

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

142
291
501
854

Bush Negro Group Showing Unfinished Dug-Out Canoe Hewn with Axe.
Photo by Gorel

[Facing p. 40]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

●854
301
291
531

An Aid to Busy Mothers.

[Facing p. 108]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

§44 not severed gently enough. During the nursing period it is
[853] often customary for the mother to abstain from intercourse, and judging by the size of the nursing children this period may last for two years.

● §54 The children are carried in the West African manner, astride on their mothers' backs and held by a band of wide cloth that goes around both mother and child. This is unlike the local Indian custom, in which the squaws carry their offspring on their hips. The children are washed often, being bathed several times a day beside the river; they stand and gurgle as the water is being poured over them.

§46 The number of births among the Djukas is not as great
§47 as might be inferred from their promiscuity. This suggests, of course, that some means of contraception is practised. In one village on the Saramacca River a medicine man showed the bahkra a yellow bery, an infusion of which is supposed to have abortive properties; it is known among the natives of British Guiana as "Doctor Doolittle." We doubt that the infusion has any such properties as are assigned to it. We also heard that the Djukas practice mechanical abortion, but their crude instruments must make this very dangerous.

§54 Excepting during the first two or three years of the children's lives, mothers acually have little to do with their care. There are usually several older children in the family, sisters, brothers, or cousins, to whom is relegated the care of the
§55 younger ones. Besides their ordinary names, children are also called according to the day of the week on which they were born, such as Friday-child, Tuesday-child, and so on.